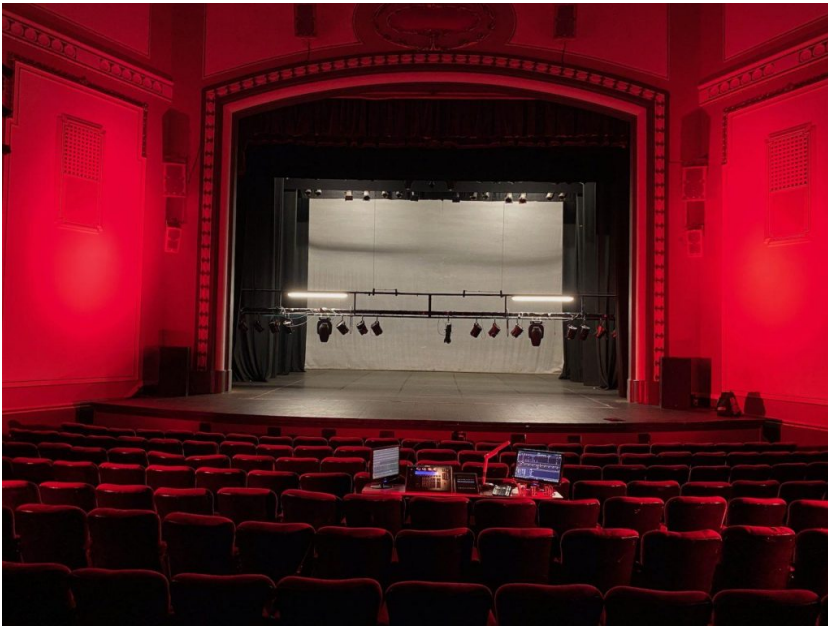


Level 1 for live events industry

Posted on September 18, 2020



Nelson Mandela Bay Theatre Complex

It's a step in the right direction for the live events industry in South Africa as the country is scheduled to move to Level 1 of the risk reduction strategy implemented to slow the spread of Covid-19, next week Monday, 21st September. The eased restrictions will allow up to 500 people for outdoor gatherings, a maximum of 250 people for indoor gatherings and a max of 100 people for funerals, while the existing restrictions on sporting events remain in place.

The news has been met with mixed emotions. For six months, the live events and technical production industry has been unable to work due to the ban on gatherings made on 15 March. Movements such as #LightSared and the #Flightcasemovement have organically grown to represent, to government, thousands of people who have had no income during this time.

Companies have retrenched or have been forced to let staff go, while many others have had no choice but to shut down.

“We are not celebrating the 250 to 500 people because this does not cover the different market segments within our industry,” said Kagiso Moima Wa Masimini, owner of rental company Blackmotion and founder of #Flightcasemovement. “It means that we will continue into unknown months of struggle in the industry because most people will remain unemployed. Companies right now do not have the capacity to reopen and operate based on the different market segments.” Not all companies work on conferences and indoor shows, and for those who have bought equipment for large outdoor events, it means their investment is literally shelved and that their crew are unable to work. Larger capacity event venues will also be left stranded. With smaller events, less staff are needed to run a show.

Sharif Baker, Chairperson of the TPSA and spokesperson for #LightSAred was interviewed on #Newzroom Africa. “Obviously, we are very appreciative of the lifting of the gatherings to accommodate 250 people indoors and 500 outdoors, and obviously we will follow a stringent safety protocol. Unfortunately, however, it will not help or assist the economy in any form whatsoever let alone our own pockets or those of freelancers. A lot of people are excited, yes, because some of the smaller venues will be able to participate in making sure they can look after artists, actors and theatres, but looking at the greater scheme of things, it’s still a long road for us.”

Over the past couple of months, SACIA, TPSA and the SA Events Council have forwarded a safety protocol and measures to the South African government to cater for at least a 1000 people. And while the Department of Sports, Arts and Culture are finally stepping in and acknowledging the live events industry, and will try assist with some form of financial support, it will clearly not be enough. “We want to get back to work, we want to help build the economy, we want to be able to look after ourselves and not go for a handout,” said Sharif. “The well from government is drying up and we want to be part of the solution and not part of the problem. To have a fifty percent venue capacity will set the ball in motion.”

The live events industry hope to join hands with the tourism industry as business conferences and events start running again. Each live event or show will be treated with care in regard to adhering to safety procedures in regards to the Covid-19 guidelines, and government will be convinced, soon enough that the events industry is ready to go to the next level.

“The beauty of the event industry is that we are strictly regulated,” said Sharif. Even prior to the Covid-19 pandemic, we could not do an event unless we were compliant with city regulations, permits and approvals. Nothing has changed but what we have done is work very hard with our SA Events Safety Council and put together a plan that directly addresses communicable diseases, specific to Covid-19. Hopefully, this will put a positive spin on trying to bring back the music to people’s hearts, lives and souls so that we can, altogether, do the Jerusalema danc,” Baker states.

When considering events hosted around the world, most of which are currently prohibited, Duncan Riley of DWR Distribution and #LightSared believes South Africa is taking a step in the right direction. “Let us be thankful,” Duncan commented. ‘Many of our friends around the globe are not allowed to host any events right now. The announcement from President Cyril Ramaphosa could have been very different, but instead it’s a positive step. Thank you to everyone who participated in #LightSared and the #Flightcasemovement. Let’s carry on the fight and let’s not give up.”